

THE POTTERY TRADITIONS IN ARMENIA FROM THE EIGHTH TO THE SEVENTH CENTURIES BC

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The archaeological materials from the excavations of the administrative and economic centres of the Urartian kingdom within the territory of present day Armenia (Teishebaini, Erebuni, Argishtihinili), were classified as belonging to the 'Urartian culture'. At the same time, with the accumulation of new data, it became evident that among the excavated materials from the 7th to 6th centuries BC there are examples, which are totally different from those known from the classic Urartian centres.²

To bring clarity to this question, the Armenian archaeologist Haroutyun Martirosyan in the early 50s of the last century introduced new conventional terms, such as 'local culture of Armenia' or 'the culture of the widespread adoption of iron', to describe those local, non-Urartian cultural elements.³ This approach first seemed to be acceptable, reflecting the cultural situation formed in the time of the Urartian expansion towards the north. However, in the last three decades, several excavations have given new information about the processes of intermingling and adaptation of Urartian and local cultures. Among the material recovered were objects that cannot easily be attributed to the above-mentioned cultural groups.⁴

The situation described above is especially discernable in the ceramic material. Moreover, the new investigations enable us to say that the Urartian pottery from the 8th to the end of the 7th centuries BC does not undergo any serious morphological or technological changes. However, the pottery recovered from the sites of the local culture of the same period undergoes significant metamorphosis.⁵

In the 8th century BC, a process of isolation of these two groups is evident. Individual layers or graves contain examples either of traditional Urartian or of traditional local pottery, but the two types are not found together. In complexes of later date (such as in Karmir Blur and contemporary sites) Urartian and local pottery are found together, as well as new types of pottery which are the result of the mixing of these two traditions. In this report we shall investigate this question by studying the evidence from sites, mainly burial complexes, situated between the Ararat valley, the slopes of Aragats mountain, and Lake Sevan.⁶

Examples of such pottery are found among others in Tomb 25 of Oshakan (Fig. 25.01.4-5). This grave contained only Urartian red pottery. Two oinochoai from this tomb are different from the classic prototypes as they have handles with circular cross-section and surface decoration. These jugs are ornamented with horizontal

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² On Urartian sites in Armenia there is an extensive literature (see Zimansky 1998). For classic Urartian sites in Armenia cf. Piotrovskij 1950, 1952, 1955; Martirosjan 1964; Israelyan 1971; Martirosjan 1974; G.G. Avetisjan 1992; H.G. Avetisyan 1999-2000; Tiracjan & Koshelenko 1985, with corresponding lists of literature. For the latest reflections on the common cultural situation of the investigated region and period see H.G. Avetisyan & P.S. Avetisyan 2006.

³ Martirosjan 1954, 1956, 1964: 193-231. For analyses of Martirosyan's ideas and for complete literature on these questions see Bobokhyan 2001: 9-10.

⁴ Tiracjan 1978, 1988; Tiratsyan & Areshyan 1990; Tiratsy'an 2003a; Esajan, Bijagov et al. 1991; G.G. Avetisjan 1992; H.G. Avetisyan & P.S. Avetisyan 2006.

⁵ The pottery traditions of this period have been specially investigated by H.G. Avetisjan; (Avetisyan 1992, 1999-2000).

⁶ To avoid repeated citations we list here the main publications on sites discussed in this article: Artashavan (P.S. Avetisyan, Engibaryan et al. 1998); Astghi Blur (Esayan 1976); Dvin (Kušnareva 1977); Golovino (Martirosjan 1954); Karchaghbyur (Yengibaryan 2002); Kuchak (Petrosyan 1992); Metsamor (Khanzadyan et al. 1973); Oshakan (Esayan & Kalantaryan 1988). The illustrations in Figs. 25.01 to 25.04 come from these publications. The source of Figs. 25.05, 25.06 and 25.07 is Harutyunyan et al. 2005. For the location of the archaeological sites see the maps in Santrot (ed.) 1996.

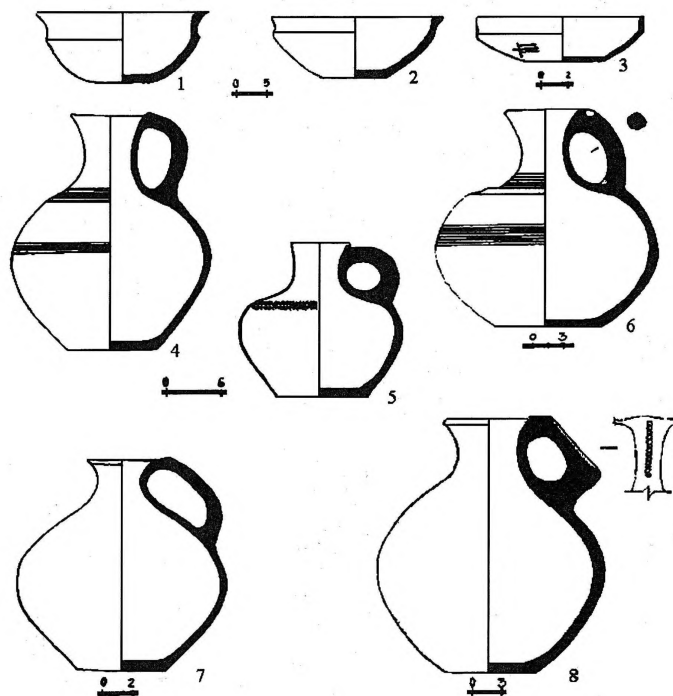


Fig. 25.01. Pottery from Oshakan Tombs 25 (4-5), 59 (3), and 69 (7) and Karchaghbyur Tombs 23 (1, 2, 6) and 28 (8).

lines and fir-tree ornament typical of the local pottery. One example with a similar shape and decoration to these vessels is known from the Tomb 23 of Karchaghbyur (Fig. 25.01.6). One-handed jugs, Urartian in shape, but of black or gray-brown ware, have been found in Oshakan Tomb 69 (Fig. 25.01.7) and Karchaghbyur Tomb 27 (Fig. 25.01.8).

In Tomb 59 of Oshakan, together with red jugs without handles, there are also black burnished examples, whose technology does not differ from that of Early Iron Age pottery in Armenia. Here, together with the red pottery, was found a black open vessel, with a potmark (Fig. 25.01.3). This vessel was clearly made in an Urartian workshop, but its composition and colour are typical of Early Iron Age examples of the region.

The Artashavan necropolis also included examples of 'mixed' style. In particular, the pottery of the Tombs 3 (Fig. 25.03) and 6 (Fig. 25.02) have a repertoire typical of pre-Urartian sites in Armenia. Vessels with trumpet-like rim, with handles and linear ornament, in some cases with false handles on the shoulder, amphora-like two handled vessels, and vessels ornamented with burnished and grooved wavy lines have many parallels in the burnt layers of Dvin and Metsamor and in many Early Iron Age tombs, dating from the transition from the 9th to the 8th centuries BC and later.

In addition to pottery like that described above from Artashavan, trilobate socketed arrow-heads⁷ and other materials, which evidently date to the 7th century BC and later, appear in several tombs (Kuchak 41, Oshakan 47, Karchaghbyur 23 and 28). Thus the traditional shapes of the pre-Urartian pottery of the region continued to be used also in later phases.

⁷ Such arrowheads have in the past been identified as Scythian and used as evidence of Scythian archers being present at sites where they were found. More recent research has shown that they were used by a variety of different peoples and were in use from the seventh to the fourth centuries BC (Esajan & Pogrebnya 1985: 53-78).



Fig. 25.02. Pottery from Artashavan Tomb 6.

One of the features of the tombs of Artashavan and of the other above-mentioned sites is that in them we have examples repeating the shapes of Urartian vessels. This is especially visible on a one handled black beaker with matt surface from Artashavan Tomb 3 (Fig. 25.03.2). With its technical and technological characteristics (i.e. the clay composition, surface treatment and colour, as well as firing temperature) this vessel is the bearer of Iron Age traditions, however morphologically (i.e. the everted pinched rim and the handle beginning under the rim) it repeats the shapes of the Urartian one-handed red beakers. A thick-walled handmade vessel with a gray-black surface from Tomb 6 also repeats the shape of a classic red Urartian bowl (Fig. 25.02.1).

The same picture is seen in Karchaghbyur Tomb 22. The two open vessels from this complex are absolutely identical with the shapes of Urartian pottery, but their clay composition and the colour of the outer surface do not differ from those of the pottery of pre-Urartian sites. Two vessels with Urartian forms are known from Artashavan Tomb 4 (Fig. 25.04.1-2). The funnel and the dish with rose surface have close parallels in the central Urartian sites, especially in Karmir Blur. The Artashavan dish differs from the classic Urartian examples only in its surface treatment: it has a matt rose surface, which is especially common in pottery of the Achaemenid period. Another example with the same sort of surface and also repeating the classic shape of Urartian jars without handles is known from Tomb 25 of Oshakan.

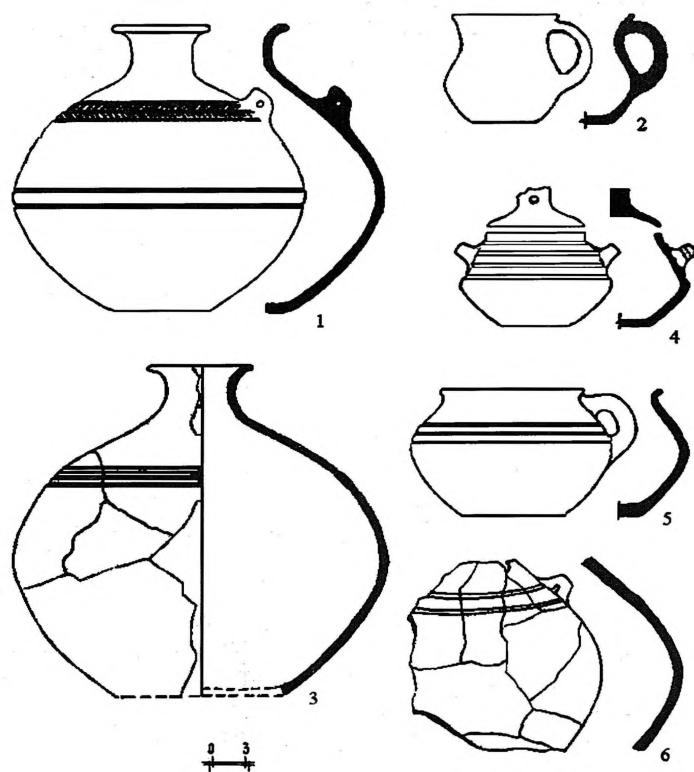


Fig. 25.03. Pottery from Artashavan Tomb 3.

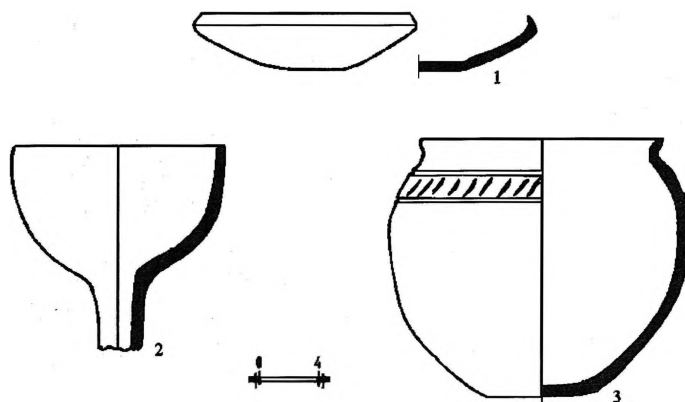


Fig. 25.04. Pottery from Artashavan Tomb 4.

In Tomb 41 of Kuchak is known a phiale (Colour plate VII.4). This form is unknown in the pre-Urartian sites of Armenia and the vessel-type appears here only after the Urartian expansion. However, the example of Kuchak, in its clay composition, surface treatment and ornamentation, is typical of the traditional pottery of pre-Urartian Armenia (Colour plate VII).

In these and in many other complexes we meet examples of such pottery, whose technical and technological features and surface colour are connected with the pottery known from the pre-Urartian sites of the region but whose ornamentation and handle shapes differ from those of the pre-Urartian tradition and also have no prototypes in the Urartian pottery-making tradition.⁸ Most characteristic are the one-handled jugs, whose handles have circular cross-sections and are ornamented with deep stepped grooves. This variant of one-handled vessels is very popular at the beginning of the 7th century BC. Similar vessels are known also from late Urartian levels and tombs, such as those at Karmir Blur (Colour plate VII.1). At the same time, open vessels with protuberant handles and circular bases became very popular and are known from such sites as Golovino, Astghi Blur, Artashavan, etc.

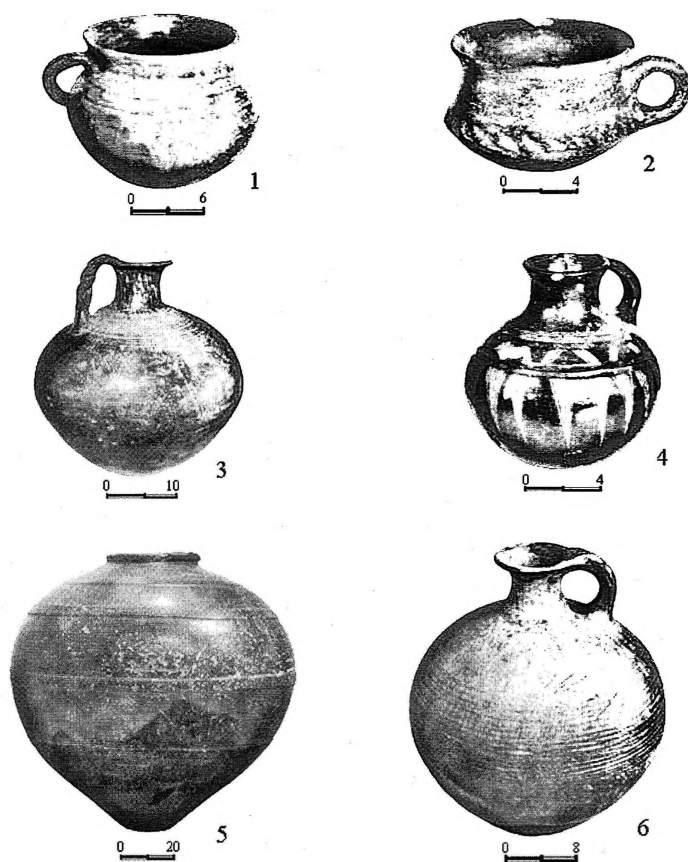


Fig. 25.05. Typical examples of 'Etiuni' pottery:
1. Karmir Blur, 2. Kuchak, 3. Sarakap, 4. Verin Getashen, 5. Dvin, 6. Chambarak.

⁸ For the pre-Urartian local pottery in Armenia ('Lchashen-Metsamor' culture) and its chronological problems see Chačatryan 1975; Khanzadyan et al. 1973; Esajan 1976; P.S. Avetisyan, Badalyan, Hmayakyan et al. 1996; Santrot (ed.) 1996; Xnkikyan 2002; P.S. Avetisyan & Bobokhyan 2008.

The majority of tombs with vessels belonging to the mixed pottery tradition also contained Scythian arrow-heads.⁹ Moreover, the Urartian and local artifacts typically found in these tombs are also found in the Urartian layers of Karmir Blur. This all enables us to date such complexes no earlier than the 7th century BC, which in turn suggests that at this period a new cultural situation in the region was developing.

Let us sum up the main results of our investigation in a historical context. The great part of the territory of present day Armenia coincides with the lands Etiuni and Uduri-Etiuni of the Urartian inscriptions, which, after the Urartian invasion at the beginning of the 8th century BC, turned into one of the most important regions of the common Urartian cultural area.¹⁰ To understand the new phenomena and the mechanisms of formation of the Urartian élite-culture in the captured northern region important insights can be gained from investigations of the pottery from the above-mentioned time span. Conventionally it is possible to divide the Iron Age archaeological sites of Armenia into two main groups:

1. Sites which were destroyed during the military campaigns of the Urartian kings and abandoned afterwards (represented by exclusively pre-Urartian layers);
2. Sites which were destroyed and rebuilt by the Urartian kings (represented by both pre-Urartian and Urartian layers).

Through comparison of the main features of the pottery from these two groups of sites it is possible to trace the process of synthesis of the local Iron Age cultural elements and those imported from the south. In the early stages of the military and political expansion of Urartu (i.e. the 9th to 8th centuries BC) these two cultural entities existed parallel to each other in comparatively 'sterile' i.e. unmixed conditions. Neither the pottery typical of the local tradition nor that typical of the imported cultural group show any serious morphological or technological changes. However, beginning in the first half of the 7th century BC, i.e. with the reign of the Urartian king Rusa son of Argishti, one can see a new situation. In addition to the picture mentioned above, a new pottery group formed through the intermingling of local and imported elements is evident.¹¹

With regard to these all, the pottery of Armenia from the 9th/8th to the 6th/5th centuries BC can be divided into three main groups, expressed in the following conventional terms:¹²

1. The typological group of local black-burnished Iron Age pottery (called 'Etiuni' or 'Lchashen-Metsamor' pottery in modern Armenian archaeological terminology) (Fig. 25.05).
2. The typological group of élite red-polished pottery imported from the south (region of Van) (called Van/Tosp or 'Biainili' pottery in modern Armenian archaeological terminology) (Colour plate VI).
3. The typological group of mixed pottery, i.e. vessels with features typical of both the above-mentioned pottery groups (called 'local Urartian' pottery in modern Armenian archaeological terminology) (Colour plate VII).

⁹ For Scythian arrowheads and the corresponding cultural contexts see Esajan & Pogrebova 1985; Kuročkin 1994.

¹⁰ Arutjunjan 1985: 262-263. For the historical-archaeological context to Uduri-Etiuni see Hmayakyan 2002.

¹¹ These archaeologically discernable data find their parallels in common historical and cultural developments of that period (Seidl 2004: 193, 207; Grekyan 2006: 176; Hmayakyan & Grekyan 2006: 255). On cultural diversity under Rusa son of Argishti, see also Zimansky this volume Chapter 07.

¹² To prevent confusion we must note that these are very conventional terms used in today's Armenian archaeology to differentiate between the three groups of pottery within the borders of modern Armenia (cf. e.g. Esajan, Bijagov et al. 1991; G.G. Avetisjan 1992). Instead of these names we could also say pottery of 'Culture A', 'Culture B' and 'Culture AB'.

According to the terminology used in European, American and Turkish literature, these pottery types are mainly represented in one group (under the name 'Urartian') defined not according to its cultural associations (as is done in Armenian archaeology) but according to ceramic characteristics (red polished, coarse, grit tempered etc., see e.g. Kozbe et al. 2001).

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Abbreviations

AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AHw	W. von Soden 1965-1981. <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> , Wiesbaden
AMI	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran</i>
AMIT	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan</i>
BAR IS	British Archaeological Reports International Series
CAD	A.L. Oppenheim & E. Reiner (eds.) 1956-. <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , Chicago-Glückstadt
CTN 5	H.W.F. Saggs 2001. <i>The Nimrud Letters, 1952</i> , Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud V, British School of Archaeology in Iraq, London
CTU	M. Salvini 2008. <i>Corpus dei testi urartei</i> Vols. 1-3. <i>Le iscrizioni su pietra e roccia</i> , Documenta Asiana 8, Rome
HchI	F.W. König 1955-1957. <i>Handbuch der chaldäischen Inschriften</i> , AfO Beiheft 8, Graz
IFŽ	<i>Istoriko-filologičeskij Žurnal [Historical-Philological Journal]</i> Patma-Banasirakan Handes, Yerevan
I.N.	<i>Ivories from Nimrud</i>
IstMitt	<i>Istanbuler Mitteilungen</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
PNA	<i>The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire</i>
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie</i>
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAA 1	S. Parpola 1987. <i>The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I. Letters from Assyria and the West</i> , SAA 1, Helsinki
SAA 4	I. Starr 1990. <i>Queries to the Sun God: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria</i> , SAA 4, Helsinki
SAA 5	G.B. Lanfranchi & S. Parpola 1990. <i>The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II. Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces</i> , SAA 5, Helsinki
SAA 7	F.M. Fales & J.N. Postgate 1992. <i>Imperial Administrative Records, Part I: Palace and Temple Administration</i> , SAA 7, Helsinki
SAA 11	F.M. Fales & J.N. Postgate 1995. <i>Imperial Administrative Records, Part II: Provincial and Military Administration</i> , SAA 11, Helsinki
SAA 15	A. Fuchs & S. Parpola 2001. <i>The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part III. Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces</i> , SAA 15, Helsinki
SAA 16	M. Luukko & G. Van Buylaere 2002. <i>The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon</i> , SAA 16, Helsinki
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies

- Sg 8 Sargon's Letter to the God Ashur. For the text see W. Mayer 1983. Sargons Feldzug gegen Urartu – 714 v. Chr., Text und Übersetzung, *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 115: 65-132
- SMEA *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici*
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- UPD I.M. D'jakonov, 1963. *Urartskie pis'ma i dokumenty [Urartian letters and documents]*, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Moskva - Leningrad
- VDI *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii [Messenger of Ancient History]*
- ZA *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*

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